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ABSTRACT

Half Pueblo and half white, a young man grew up in the Taos Pueblo, made contributions to his Indian people, and decided to work as a mental health professional. Having grown up learning the Indian ways, the young man accepted his heritage and pursued a college education in Social Work after working as a teacher's aide at the Pueblo Day School, registering visitors to the pueblo, and forming a Committee of Concern for young people drinking and taking drugs. After obtaining a degree in Social Work, he joined the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Social Service Department where he learned a great deal from many sources, much of it through trial and error. Experiencing and seeing alcoholism as the number one problem of the pueblo, the young man contributed his time to starting an alcoholism treatment program for the community. Having not been an alcoholic became a hindrance, and after directing the program for 3 years he entered graduate school at Florida State University. After completing graduate school he returned home to train paraprofessionals on five reservations for groups such as Alcoholism Counselors, tribal Health and Welfare Aides, Youth Development Coordinators, Employment Assistance Counselors, and the like. (ERB)

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TO HELP MY PEOPLE

The Evolution of a Paraprofessional

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TO HELP MY PEOPLE

The Evoluation of a Paraprofessional

My name is Carlos Archuleta, and I live in Taos, New Mexico. I am not primarily of Spanish descent, as my name would suggest, although it is said that the blood of the early Spanish explorers of the Southwest runs in the veins of my father's people. Archuleta is the baptismal name given my ancestors by the Franciscan priests who accompanied the Spanish soldiers, persuading the Pueblo Indians in the early 1600s to join the Catholic church or die. Among my people our Indian names are used, as we speak in our Tewa language for privacy. The name chosen for me by my Indian relatives at birth was White Singer.

My mother is a White woman, who came from Massachusetts in the 1920s to teach school in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she met my father as a student seven years her junior. In addition to my appearance, having always passed for White among strangers, she contributed much to my valuing learning of the White man's ways, but my heart was Red, and it has always been with my father's people, my people.

This was not true of my brother Roberto, three years younger, or six years younger sister Beverly, who never returned to the reservation after graduation from high school. Roberto went to live with my mother's people in Massachusetts where he is now a computor programmer, and Beverly married a serviceman, and is now service retired and working as a nurse in Florida. I do not blame them for their decision to enter the mainstream of American life, although I am sorry that they experienced a sense of shame for their Indian blood. I cannot help but feel they have lost something in turning

their backs on our people, where there is pride, to identify with the majority society who will always carry the guilt of their ancestors for the way they have treated the First Americans. This treatment is very fresh in the minds of Indian people today.

My mother and father were in agreement that Indian people could only drown in their bitterness, and each in his or her own way taught me how to cope with the challenges within and without the Indian community. My mother even suggested that I use an Anglicized version of my name, Charles, but I have usually resisted doing this, as it dishonors my ancestors who accepted the Spanish name, regardless of the circumstances.

During my elementary school years at the Bureau of Indian Affairs Day School at the pueblo, I spent most of one semester in the Kiva, our Indian church below ground entered through the roof, learning our Indian ways from the Caseque, our religious leader, and other selected elders of the tribe. We learned many things of the ways of the Great Spirit, how nature is willing to be our partner, and of the special gifts to our Taos people such as the sacred Blue Lake nestled in the Taos mountain 27 miles above our village, where we go to the source of all the lifegiving water we use. This area was restored to us only three years ago when President Nixon and the Congress agreed that it was rightfully ours. Do not think this merely took bringing such a matter to their attention; this had been fought by our tribal leaders for 29 years, during which time every other tribe in the country had accepted defeat on their land claims and had accepted whatever compensation the government was willing to offer. Only Taos had insisted that the lake was our central Church, and without it being ours

we were certain to die as a people. I may only bore you with such matters, but they are meant to explain in part why I must do my best to help my people in whatever way I can when others before me have given their time, their gifts, and many of their lives to preserve the traditional ways of life we have depended upon for our stability for 600 years.

After graduating from high school in the town of Taos, where I experienced discrimination from the Spanish, the White, and even from some of my Indian peers, I tried to remain in the pueblo with my parents. There were few tribal jobs, and the government positions were recommended by the Tribal Councilmen. Nepotism was not only practiced, it was openly defended, as in the Spanish-American culture. As they would say, "Why hire a stranger who has no obligation to you; hire a friend or relative who will want to hold up his head among those he is closest to." I worked in a lumber yard in the town of Taos, three miles from the pueblo, for two years before a great opportunity came to go to the northeast to college under a special foundation grant for Indians who had shown high academic achievement in the sciences.

I entered Middlebury College in Vermont in 1948 as a pre-dental major, pursuing a program heavy in the physical sciences. I lasted only two years before the longing to be with my people was stronger than my hope of serving them professionally as a dentist. I was also convinced that my interest was in the social lives of my people, rather than in their physical health alone.

I returned to New Mexico and obtained a position as a teacher's aide in the Pueblo Day School. The school sponsored some courses for college

credit in early childhood development and normal and abnormal psychology, which whetted my appetite for more, and the next fall I entered the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque for an undergraduate major in Social Work. I enjoyed this, but the next year my mother fell ill, and I used this excuse to return to the pueblo. My father had been appointed to the Tribal Council, and through him I obtained a job registering people that visited the pueblo, collecting a fee at the same time to park their car. Ours is the most famous of all the 19 pueblos, the one with the two five story apartment houses of adobe on either side of Taos river, the ten foot wide stream that runs through our village from the Blue Lake. We are the only Indian community that does charge to visit, which though not the Indian way of open hospitality, enables us to support our Tribal Government who for most part do not have other jobs during their year in office. I enjoyed this work, meeting people from all over the world, but I regreted their naive questions, and their inability to see the simple beauty in the adobe walls and the Indian children happily playing in the soil, much less the wealth of the culture of a people who were little changed since before the arrival of Columbus. Many really seemed to want to help, but this was typically in the form of a handout such as has crippled us through the Bureau of Indian Affairs paternalism, until our fields are left untilled and the herds have shrunk. But again I digress.

On my own time I attempted to do something for the young people my own age who were out of school, typically having gone to the local schools, the BIA boarding schools in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, and often to several others in states such as Oklahoma, Utah, Nevada, and California: but had

never found themselves, and falling behind their age group, had finally dropped out. I saw that they were the ones remaining in the pueblo who would be our leaders in a few years, ill equiped to cope with the complexities of government policies and the efforts of the private sector to help the Indians out; often out of much they held dear in traditional tribal ways.

Together with a few older people concerned about the increased drinking and use of drugs the young people had taken to run from the frustration over their lack of direction, we formed a Committee of Concern. This did not set very well with the tribes chosen leaders who guarded their power closely. Previously we had called upon them for help, but they countered our requests for more recreational facilities with the contention that if the young people followed their traditional ways they would be anything but purposeless. I realize now that there was much truth in what they said, although it would require a good deal of patience and skill to help the young people to experience gratification through personal service to their community; but at the time I felt with the rest of our group that the elders were just out of touch with our needs. We developed softball and basketball teams, organized a rodeo club, supported the creation of a Boys Club and a Girls Club, and in general did all we could to fill their free time. I realize now that we were doing too much for them, for while they attended the events themselves, there was poor attendance at the planning meetings, preparation for the events, and the inevitable cleanup. The adults who did help didn't seem to mind, because we felt that we were meeting a real need of our people. We would have been insulted if we had been

told that we were denying them opportunities to grow, even when we were taken aback when we looked around and found that the social problems had not been reduced, and now we were being blamed for this since we had stated it as our goal in launching the recreational program. A few people who could see no further than we could, blamed it on the kids and thanked us for trying.

My efforts in the pueblo's behalf were recognized by the Community Services Branch of the BIA, who asked me if I would like a position with their Social Service Department as a Social Service Associate. This usually required a BA Degree, of which I was still one year short, but they said I could finish up at the College of Santa Fe, where half of the field work courses could even be taken in the Indian villages on the job. Frankly I had become a bit discouraged with the Taos Youth Recreation Program and felt I would profit in comparing the problems of my peublo with the other seven pueblos north of Santa Fe, which comprise the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council.

My two years with the Bureau were most educational, as I was able to apply my college course work to real problems every day, but I resisted the ways of the White man for problem solving since they seemed too slow and complicated. I could not see the sense in asking a person with a problem how he felt about it, or what he thought he should do about it. I felt that I knew that he was feeling very frustrated about having the problem at all and I could even understand his anger at having to ask for help, but it certainly seemed that he deserved to be told what I would do about it if I were he. When my so-called professional supervisors told

me that this was not only not helpful, but was actually harmful, I told them that they just did not understand the Indian ways.

I look back on my so-called in-service training as a collection of prejudices, as I learned about alcoholism from the Alcoholics Anonymous members, about the dangers of drug abuse from the BIA Law and Order police, how to deal with family problems from the Catholic priests, the tribal elders, and the Public Health doctors, and much from the people themselves through trial and error. In my heart I knew that I needed to know more, but my clients were appreciative on being able to call on me whenever they needed help. My employers said that I was helpful to them in reaching the people, and the tribal leaders who formed the multi-pueblo council expressed grudging respect for my having served the needs of their people with a consciencousness equal to a fullblood.

The biggest problem on all of the reservations seemed to be alcoholism. The Public Health Service called it the #1 health problem, my BIA employers saw it as the greatest weakener of family life, and our tribal leaders complained that it ruined some of the best men in our tribe. I had experienced it years earlier close at hand when my father had turned to it to close his ears to the criticism of his family and neighbors for having married a White woman. I had experienced the angry talk and even physical abuse when he would come home late under the influence of the drink and the advice of his drinking friends. These were the only times that he would look at me as other than a loving father, and I felt shame that this sickness should come to our family. His drinking ended one night while driving back on the old road from town when he ran into and killed one of

the strayed sacred tribal buffalos that are only killed for ceremonial purposes. He was called before the Council and fined, but somehow the event brought him to his senses, for as he said to me then, "I have offended the Great Spirit with my behavior. The next time my punishment will be far greater, perhaps even to harming a member of my family." He has not had a drink in the twenty years since then.

Some of our leaders returning from Washington said that grants were being given to form alcoholism treatment programs in Indian communities. I was asked to organize one for the Eight Northern Pueblos. We hired indigenous alcoholism counselors in each village who were former problem drinkers themselves, started AA groups, conducted alcohol abuse education programs for the whole community, and finally even opened a half-way house for the combined villages drinkers. We worked long hours trying to persuade the drinkers of the physical and social consequences of their behavior, and trying to devise ways to separate them from their bottles, by hook or crook, but our progress was very slow. Even our counselors would become so frustrated that they would go back to drinking with their clients. I directed this program for three years, constantly fighting the accusation that I could not be expected to understand how either the clients or the counselors felt since I was not an alcoholic myself. I even found myself mentioning my father's experience as some form of credentials, but caught myself in time to avoid falling into the most handicapping trap of the sober alcoholic; that there is in some way pride in having HAD the illness. However, I guess I copped out too, because I jumped at the chance when I heard that they were looking for Indians to take graduate education to become social workers.

Many of my fellow Indian students went to colleges in the Southwest, where they were said to understand Indians and were careful to water down the difficulty of the work and to not say anything that might be a new idea that could conflict with an Indian belief. I chose to attend Florida State University, partially to avoid the aforementioned, and partly to see how the Indians of Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida were treated. I had heard that they were classed below the Blacks, and while this proved to be true, there was nevertheless an element of apology in the attitude of the Whites regarding the Indians, recognizing that this had been their land at one time. Not so for the Blacks, toward whom the inferior position was given without hesitency. I even heard it in the churches, where the inferiority of the Blacks was supported by scripture. It was bad enough that my people had been called heathens, but always there was hope if they would embrace the particular brand of Christianity being espoused. I am sure the guilt was buried there for some of the Whites for having stolen these people from their native homes for purely selfish purposes, but it was well coated with the sickeningly sweet sirup of religion. I brought back from Florida the realization that to serve one oppressed minority would serve the interests of all.

My two years of graduate school were painful ones, for which the instructors made no apology. I felt at first that it was because of my Indian blood that they were critical of me but I soon found out that all of my fellow students were being helped to examine very carefully why they did what they did and were amazed and chagrined at what they discovered. This was a new experience for me, for in addition to the resentence my

fellow students experienced in giving up old ways, I had to constantly guard against unwitingly giving up something of value of my people's culture. It has been almost 15 years since I completed my graduate training, and any confusion that may have been created then between the teachings of Freud and those of our ancestors has been resolved, and I am convinced that the anti-professional biases of minority member para-professionals are based on a combination of unawareness of what the process of professional training entails and a reluctance to invest the time and effort involved in the process of achieving professional status. One fears what one does not know, and what one fears one either runs from or attacks.

Most of my time these days is spent in training paraprofessionals, whether as consultant on cultural characteristics of Indians for the psychiatric ward staff of the Mental Health Center in Albuquerque staffed by the University of New Mexico Medical School Department of Psychiatry as a Clinical Associate, teaching group psychotherapy to paraprofessionals in the Continuing Education Department of the same university on Monday evenings or teaching psychotherapy compatable with Indian ways to Mental Health Technicians working with urban Indians for the All Indian Pueblo Council. The services to non-Indians serving my people are all on Mondays when I travel 130 miles south from my home in Taos to my office in Albuquerque, where I confer with other professionals of the Mental Health Branch of the Indian Health Service, U. S. Public Health Service. The remainder of my regular schedule is spent on one of five reservations I serve in northern New Mexico, southern Colorado, and Utah, including my home community

of Taos Pueblo. While most of my time at these reservations is spent conducting training courses for groups such as Alcoholism Counselors, Community Health Representatives, Emergency Food and Medical Service Workers, tribal Health and Welfare Aides, Youth Development Coordinators, Employment Assistance Counselors, Mental Health Technicians, and the like, I am also available for diagnosis and treatment, and consultation about persons the community is especially concerned about, and aiding the various tribal councils and community agencies in Community Mental Health Planning. Trips outside the Southwest are a rarity and a luxury I feel acutely when there is still so much to be done among my people, but I felt the opportunity to serve on the National Executive Board of the American Orthopsychiatry Association was a chance to add the voice of my people to the planning in the mental health field related to minority groups, so I accepted election to this body meeting in New York. I do not think of myself as a radical in this regard, but I have had and know of experiences of minority member friends within and without the Indian community that should be shared.

This month I quietly and thoughtfully observed my 49th birthday. I was 34 before achieving the rank of a beginning professional, and I think back as to whether I might have made a greater contribution to help my people if I had completed my graduate training ten or fifteen years earlier. Acknowledging that if I had known more I could have done more, I nevertheless am convinced that I am better able to identify with the Indian people I train now having previously struggled as they are with little more than good intentions and a feeling of the need to do something NOW. Both in

my duties as Administrator of the Indian Mental Health Coordinator Program in our Area, that selects and trains indigenous Indian paraprofessionals to live and work in their own tribal communities, and in my psychotherapy training of paraprofessionals at the Indian Health Service National Training Center in Tucson where I serve as Coordinator of Field Instructors for all the Indians taking the two year Associate of Arts Degree program in Mental Health Technology, I believe my past experience in helping my people to realize that it is a handicap to work conscientiously without training in such skills as the use of the professional helping relationship does much to bridge the gap.

My appearance is still against me, as the Navajos playfully call me "Bellagana," which they insist merely means White persons, forgetting that I know all the feeling that goes into the term for General Custer's successors. For those that resist almost any new ideas, they have the easy out of seeing me alligned with my White half. Occasionally I gain support from my blond-haired and blue-eyed Indian brothers and sisters from Oklahoma or California, but even then our very appearance is a reminder of the threat of the melting pot that is AMERICA desolving the essence of what sets us apart.

In concluding my personal remarks from the heart of one evolving paraprofessional, I would offer a couple of recommendations for those of you working with mental health paraprofessionals:

1) Do not run down your own competence, because (1) the paraprofessionals' defensive needs to deny this are great, and (2) they need to think that you value your training if they are going to be encouraged to sample it.

2) Focus on self-awareness and sensitivity early in the training process. Especially with human service workers lacking good backgrounds in dynamic psychology, they are quick to intellectualize and to add new concepts and jargon to their layman's tendency to give advice, rather than drawing out the client. Self-awareness causes them to pause and consider before rushing in.

3) Finally, respect and reinforce their pride in their culture, but draw them out as to the whys behind their behavior so that they do not fall into the trap of passing their behavior off as "The Black Way," "The Chicano Way," "The Indian Way," or "The Chinese Way" to cover what is actually their unique personal biases and prejudices. The knowledge and techniques gaps will follow for the worker that has found himself and still enjoys serving all those in need.

Professionals were all paraprofessionals once. We were quite right then in feeling that we had a special identification with those most like ourselves. Our training has subtly moved us from this position as we have learned a little bit about the infinite complexities of the human personality, but we must respect the dogmatic at times convictions of the paraprofessionals that "They know how the client feels." You KNOW how much they have to learn from you, but you can learn much from them of what the client is going through in the system they must operate within. Where there is mutual respect throughout the mental health team, far more

can be done than when the parts are operating independently. Therefore do not turn the paraprofessionals loose to flounder or reinforce bad habits. Only when all concerned persons work together can we begin to come to grips with interrelated community problems.

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